

*Apr. 22 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997*

Two at Grand Forks Air Force Base. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Kenneth Hess, USAF, Base Commander, Grand Forks Air Force Base.

## Statement on Investment Sanctions Against Burma

*April 22, 1997*

Today I am announcing my decision to impose a ban on new U.S. investment in Burma.

I have taken this step in response to a constant and continuing pattern of severe repression by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in Burma. During the past 7 months, the SLORC has arrested and detained large numbers of students and opposition supporters, sentenced dozens to long-term imprisonment, and prevented the expression of political views by the democratic opposition, including Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD).

I have therefore imposed sanctions under the terms of the "Cohen-Feinstein" amendment, a bipartisan measure that I fully support. As contained in the Burma policy provision of the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1997 (Public Law 104-208), this amendment calls for investment sanctions if the Government of Burma has physically harmed, rearrested for political acts, or exiled Aung San Suu Kyi, or has committed large-scale repression of, or violence against, the democratic opposition. It is my judgment that recent actions by the regime in Rangoon constitute such repression.

Beyond its pattern of repressive human rights practices, the Burmese authorities also have committed serious abuses in their recent military campaign against Burma's Karen minority, forcibly conscripting civilians and compelling thousands to flee into Thailand. The SLORC regime has overturned the Burmese people's democratically elected leadership. Under this brutal mili-

tary regime, Burma remains the world's leading producer of opium and heroin, and tolerates drug trafficking and traffickers in defiance of the views of the international community. The regime has shown little political will to stop the narcotics exports from Burma and prevent illicit drug money from enriching those who would flaunt international rules and profit by destroying the lives of millions.

The United States and other members of the international community have firmly and repeatedly taken steps to encourage democratization and human rights in Burma. Through our action today, we seek to keep faith with the people of Burma, who made clear their support for human rights and democracy in 1990 elections which the regime chose to disregard. We join with many others in the international community calling for reform in Burma, and we emphasize that the U.S.-Burma relationship will improve only as there is progress on democratization and respect for human rights.

In particular, we once again urge the authorities in Burma to lift restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi and the political opposition, respect the rights of free expression, assembly, and association, and undertake a dialog on Burma's political future that includes leaders of the NLD and the ethnic minorities.

NOTE: The related Executive order of May 20 prohibiting new investment in Burma is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks on the Chemical Weapons Convention and an Exchange With Reporters

*April 23, 1997*

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Wallace, for your re-

marks and for your service; Mr. Vice President; General Shalikashvili. Thank you, General

Scowcroft, for being here. Thank you, Admiral Zumwalt, for being here and for being on this issue for so long. General Jones, Admiral Arthur, to all the distinguished veterans and veterans groups who are with us today and to the men and women in uniform who are here today. And I'd like to say a special word of thanks to General Powell and to Senator Dole for being here.

You have witnessed today, I believe, an example of America at its best, working as it should, putting the interests of the American people and the interests of the men and women of America in uniform first. And it is something for which I am very grateful.

This treaty will make our troops safer. It will make our Nation more secure. It will at least reduce the likelihood that innocent civilians here and around the world will be exposed in the future to horrible chemical weapons. That is why every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs for the last 20 years and all the military leaders and political leaders and veterans you have heard today have supported it.

All the arguments have been made, so I would like to tell you a story. We now know that chemical weapons have bedeviled Americans in uniform from Belleau Wood in World War I to Baghdad in the Gulf war. We know that thousands were injured or killed by chemical warfare in World War I. And I thought it would be a wonderful thing today to show what this treaty is all about, to have one remarkable American veteran of World War I who survived such an attack. And he is here with us today, Mr. George Clark. Thank you for coming, sir. God bless you.

Mr. Clark was just in the Oval Office with all of us. And Senator Dole apparently asked him if he was a contemporary of Senator Thurmond, and he said he thought Senator Thurmond was a little young for the heavy responsibilities that he has enjoyed. *[Laughter]*

As a 16-year-old marine, almost 80 years ago, George Clark fought in the Battle of Soissons in July of 1918. Taking cover in a ditch during fierce fighting, his squad came under artillery attack by mustard gas. Every man except him was either killed or wounded as the poisonous fog settled on the ground. But Corporal Clark, who received the Purple Heart for what he endured that day—and he's wearing it here today, 80 years later—refused medical treatment even though, as he said, "It hurt my lungs bad." This man went on to serve our country in World

War II and the Korean war in the Army and in the Air Force, retiring after 32 years of active duty.

Sir, I thank you for your extraordinary record of service and sacrifice to our Nation. I thank you for caring about all the young people who will follow in your footsteps and for taking the effort and the trouble to be here today to support the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention. God bless you, sir, and thank you.

All the arguments have been made, and the vote is about to come in. But let me just restate a couple of points I think are very important that the opponents of this treaty cannot effectively rebut. We have decided—as General Powell said, we have decided to give up our chemical weapons. We decided to do that a long time ago.

Now, as more and more nations eliminate their arsenals and they give up not only their arsenals, but they give up developing, producing, and acquiring such weapons, our troops will be less likely to face attack. But also as stockpiles are eliminated and as the transfer of dangerous chemicals—including chemicals which can be put together to form chemical weapons for that purpose—as that is controlled, it will be more difficult for terrorists and for rogue states to get or make poison gas. That is why it is not a good argument that we don't have some countries involved in this treaty. That's not an argument against ratification. This commits everybody else not to give them anything that they can use to make chemical weapons to use against our forces or innocent civilians.

We also have now tough new tools on short notice, on-site inspections; we create a worldwide intelligence and information sharing network; we strengthen the authority of our own law enforcement officials. That is also very important. That's one of the reasons the Japanese were so supportive of this, because of what they have endured in their country. All these things together are going to help us make America's men and women in uniform and American citizens safer.

During the last 2 months, as Senator Dole said so clearly, we have worked hard with Senate Majority Leader Lott, Senator Helms, Senator Lugar, Senator Biden, and others. We've resolved virtually all the concerns that some Senators have raised, and those resolutions will be embodied tomorrow in an amendment with the

28 understandings to which Senator Dole referred.

Now, we can't let the minor and relatively small number of disagreements that remain blind us to the overwhelming fact, to use the words of Admiral Zumwalt, that at the bottom line our failure to ratify will substantially increase the risk of a chemical attack against American service personnel. None of us should be willing to take that. As Commander in Chief, I cannot in good conscience take that risk. I'm very proud of the work that's been done under the two predecessor administrations to mine of the opposite party. And I'm very proud that we're all standing here together today as Americans in support of a good and noble and tremendously significant endeavor. And all working together, maybe tomorrow it will come out all right.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Q. Mr. President, at his briefing today, Senator Lott appeared to be leaning toward supporting this treaty—that's sort of my analysis—because of the so-called 28 conditionalities, as he says. If there are so many provisos—if this passes with so many provisos, what is the rest of the world going to think of this treaty? And can we just—the United States say, because we're putting so much in the bill—can we just say, "You accept it the way we like it?"

*The President.* If you read the provisos tomorrow, every one of them is consistent with the overall treaty and would clearly be a clarification of it. I think the rest of the world will applaud what we have done. And I believe that in very important respects they will say, "That's the way we read the treaty all along." So I believe it will be reinforcing it. And I think you'll see the differences over the debate tomorrow, where the line falls. I think it will be clear that this will strengthen and enhance the meaning of the treaty, not only for ourselves but for others all around the world.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Wallace, executive director, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (ret.), former National Security Adviser; Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN (ret.), former Chief of Naval Operations; Gen. David C. Jones, USAF (ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Vice Adm. Stanley R. Arthur, USN (ret.), former Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Logistics; Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and former Senator Bob Dole.

## Statement on the Supreme Court Decision To Expedite Review of the Line Item Veto

*April 23, 1997*

I am pleased that the Supreme Court has granted the Solicitor General's request to provide an expedited review of a lower court ruling on the line item veto. The line item veto provides a critical tool for the President to strike wasteful spending and tax items from legislation.

Congress took the correct step giving the President this authority, and I was pleased to sign the line item veto into law. It is my hope that this expedited ruling will clear up any confusion on this matter.

## Message on the Observance of Take Our Daughters to Work Day

*April 23, 1997*

Warm greetings to everyone participating in "Take Our Daughters to Work Day." We dedi-

cate this special day each year to empowering girls with the encouragement and practical work